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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, January 1, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WINTER PRESERVES FOR VARIETY." Information from the Market Basket, Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

A happy and prosperous New Year to everybody! A change is good for all of us,- even such a simple change as writing 1937 instead of 1936 at the top of a letter. That's why it seems appropriate to the season to be thinking about a little variety in the winter menus,- my subject today. As the old proverb puts it, variety is the spice of life, and in a moment I expect to tell you how to get a little spice into the variety!

I'm thinking about the accessories to our meals, like the colorful jelly that goes with a leg of lamb, the tart preserves that enhance the mild flavor of chicken, or the spicy conserve that combines so well with beef.

Some of us find at this time of year that the supply of preserves from last summer's fresh fruit has dwindled beyond expectations. Maybe we put up less than usual. Or drew rather heavily on our stock for Christmas gifts. Whatever the reason, the gaps can be easily filled. We can make some winter preserves with materials from the grocer's shelves and the storage cellar.

Let's check over the possibilities. Most of the dried fruits make good preserves. After restoring their moisture, they need only be cooked with enough sugar to produce a jam-like consistency. Dried peaches and apricots are especially good jam-makers. So are prunes, which you can spice. Then there are combinations, like prunes with apricots, or prune and date jam. You can also put raisins, dates, and figs into other dried fruit preserves. And doubtless you know that delicious combination of dried apricots with canned pineapple.

Then of course we have several fresh fruits available all winter in most sections of the country. There are oranges, grapefruit, lemons, cranberries, and apples. Have you ever tried "amber marmalade", made from one orange, one grapefruit, and one lemon? If not, there's a treat in store for the family, and an economical one at that. The three pieces of fruit, with the sugar, will yield about 5 pints of delicious marmalade costing less than half a dollar at present prices. Oranges and lemons, without the grapefruit, will also make good marmalade. It used to be thought necessary to cook the fruit for amber marmalade on three separate days, but the Bureau of Home Economics has worked out a quick process for making it in about 2 hours.

First step: Select one orange, one grapefruit, and one lemon, each of a yellow, smooth, thick-skinned type, free from blemishes. Remove the peel and slice it very thin.

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Next: Parboil the peel three times. Each time cover it with 1 quart of water, bring the water to the boiling point, cook for five minutes, drain, and throw the water away.

Meantime: Cut the pulp into thin slices, remove the seeds and the "rag", and combine the pulp and the parboiled peel.

Now: To each pressed measure of this mixed fruit pulp and parboiled skins, add three times the measure of water. Boil rapidly for 40 minutes.

At this point you will need a large kettle, for you keep what liquid there is, and combine the mixture with an equal amount of sugar, and a little salt. Boil rapidly for 25 minutes, or until the jelly stage is reached. If you like a thick marmalade, boil longer, but watch to prevent scorching. Put into hot sterilized glasses, and cover with paraffin when cold.

To return to the other fruits available for winter preserves: We shall have cranberries for several months to come. As they have a high pectin and acid content, they rank among the best jelly makers. I hardly need to tell my listeners how quickly a batch of cranberry sauce can be cooked to go with a dinner of turkey or roast chicken, or to use as a filling for an open-faced pie. Raisins with cranberries are another excellent pie-filling, by the way.

Or you may like your cranberry sauce strained- the pulp pressed through a sieve, and then cooked with the sugar and poured into molds. You can also make a clear sparkling jelly from the juice, just as you make fruit jellies in summer-time. Cranberry is one of the most beautiful jellies of all because of its gorgeous color. It keeps its fine fresh flavor for some time if sealed and stored in a cool dark place.

I must remind you that cranberry jelly or sauce should be molded in glasses of a size that will be just right for one meal. Cranberry products tend to "weep"- you know what I mean,- they become watery when cut.

Honey-cranberry jam is another good cranberry preserve. Use 1 cup of water, 1-1/2 cups of honey, and 1 quart of cranberries. Cook slowly until the berries are soft. Then remove the berries but continue boiling the sirup until you have just enough to cover the berries. Put the berries back in the hot sirup, pour into jars and seal. Orange and cranberry conserve is still another possibility.

Some of the winter apples are among the best jelly-makers. Apple mint jelly, with a few drops of peppermint flavor and some green coloring, is a delicious accompaniment to lamb, and many other meats as well.

One of my favorite winter desserts is a near relative of the preserve family, though not so sweet. It's "apple compote". I cook the apples in a medium sirup- equal parts of sugar and water- until they are tender, but still shapely. Then I concentrate the sirup until it is rich and thick and pour it over the apples. I always make a hit with the family if I color the sirup red and serve the compote hot with hard sauce. Sometimes I use red cinnamon candies to do the coloring and add a spicy flavor.

With all these possibilities, spiced or otherwise, the family surely need not lack for variety in preserves the next few months! A Happy New Year to each and every one of you!